

## Food Problems Vary Among Regions and Countries

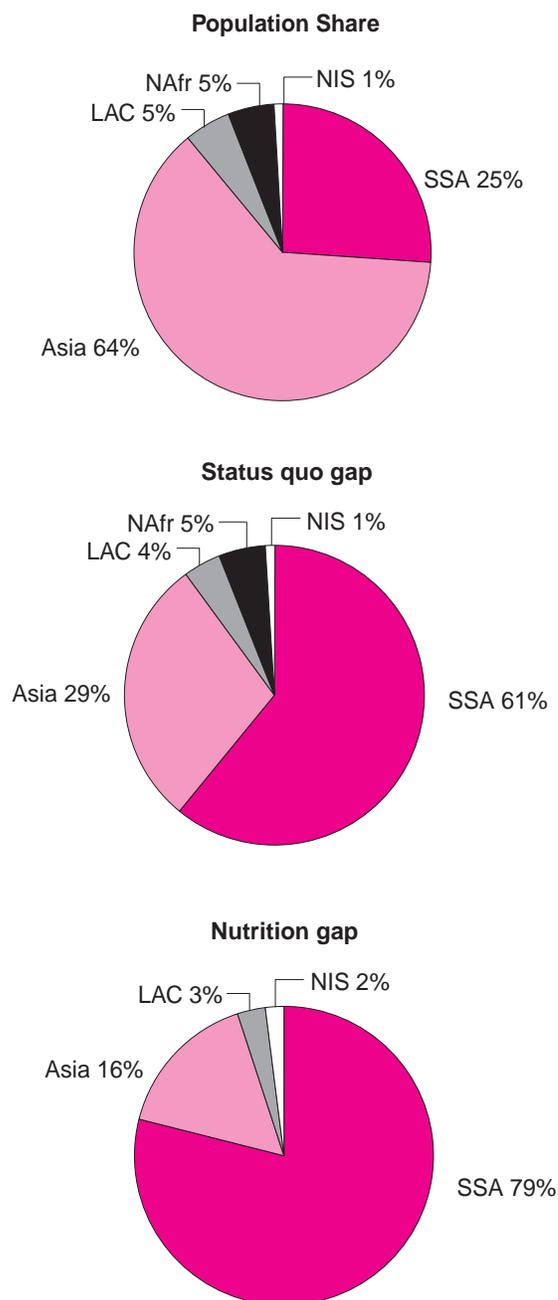
Regional comparisons of projections of food gaps reveal the intensity of the current as well as future food security problems of different regions. The results place Sub-Saharan Africa as the most food-insecure region. By 2008, this region is projected to account for 61 percent of the total (all 66 countries) gap to maintain consumption and 79 percent of the gap to meet nutritional needs even though the region's population constitutes only 25 percent of the 66-country total (fig. 1). The region's nutrition gap, as a share of consumption (total available food supplies), is projected to exceed 10 percent by 2008 (fig. 2). The main problem in the Sub-Saharan Africa region is high population growth, which puts pressure on food supplies; while the region's production growth during 1980-97 exceeded that in Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), its population growth was also higher.

In addition to inadequate food availability, skewed distribution of purchasing power amplifies Sub-Saharan Africa's nutritional problems. The distribution gap for the region is projected to be 27 million tons in 2008. This is 21 percent higher than the region's aggregate nutrition gap. The number of people in Sub-Saharan Africa who cannot meet their nutritional requirements is projected to increase from 361 million during 1995-97 to 516 million by 2008 (fig. 3). This means that two-thirds of this region's population will be undernourished in 2008. Sub-Saharan Africa also suffers the greatest nutritional problems. It is the only region where consumption is projected to fall below the minimum nutritional requirement for 80 percent of the population during the next decade (table 2). In other regions, the problem is generally concentrated in the lowest income group (20 percent of the population).

The Asian countries included in this study, despite having the second largest nutrition gap, have made significant gains in increasing food availability over the past three decades. The ratio of food gaps to total consumption is very small (1-2 percent), and is projected to remain relatively constant for the next decade. Asia will account for 64 percent of the population of all the study countries in 2008, and is projected to account for only 29 percent of the

Figure 1  
**Population and food gaps in 2008**

*While Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to account for only 25 percent of the population of the 66 countries in 2008, the region is expected to account for 79 percent of the nutrition gap.*



LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean, NAfr = North Africa, NIS = New Independent States, SSA = Sub-Saharan Africa.

**Table 2—Ratio of consumption to nutritional requirements**

*Consumption is projected to fall short of the minimum nutritional requirement for all but the highest income group in the Sub-Saharan region.*

Region	Income quintiles				
	Lowest 20%	Second	Third	Fourth	Highest 20%
<b>North Africa</b>					
Base	0.99	1.08	1.14	1.19	1.30
2008	1.11	1.17	1.22	1.27	1.38
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>					
Base	0.74	0.82	0.88	0.94	1.09
2008	0.70	0.78	0.83	0.89	1.03
<b>Asia</b>					
Base	0.89	0.97	1.03	1.08	1.20
2008	0.89	0.96	1.00	1.06	1.19
<b>LAC</b>					
Base	0.75	0.89	0.97	1.05	1.20
2008	0.85	0.95	1.03	1.11	1.31
<b>NIS<sup>1</sup></b>					
Base	0.74	0.83	0.88	0.93	1.01
2008	0.92	1.00	1.06	1.13	1.24

<sup>1</sup> Regional average income distribution was used for estimation.

status quo food gap and 16.5 percent of the nutrition gap. In fact, most Asian countries may be able to close their food gaps by increasing imports slightly above projected growth rates. The region's impressive gains, however, mask food problems of large segments of the population whose purchasing power is insufficient. When skewed purchasing power is taken into account, the region's distribution gap is projected at almost two times the average nutrition gap in 2008. Moreover, although the number of people who cannot meet their nutritional requirements is projected to decline over the next decade, still 40 percent of the region's population will be undernourished in 2008.

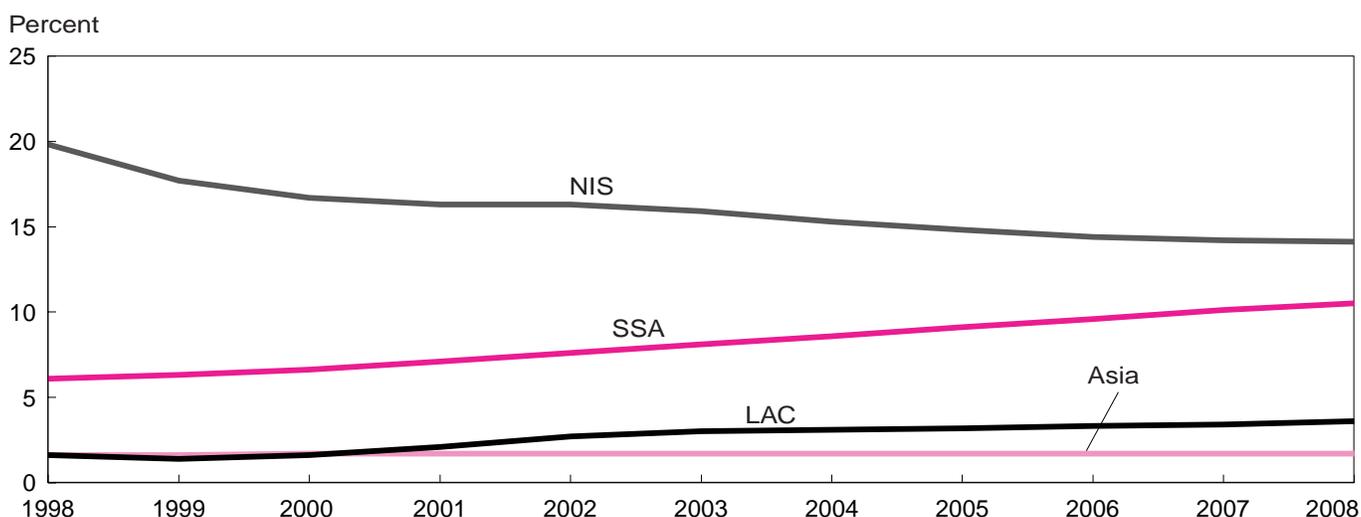
In LAC, the most difficult dimension of food security is the distribution of food within each country. The distribution gap is projected to be almost three times larger than the nutrition gap in 2008. The number of people who cannot meet their nutritional requirements is projected to decline slightly between the 1995-97 average levels and 2008. However, 40 percent of the LAC region's population is projected to be undernourished in 2008. Because the distribution of income is highly skewed, low-income households have limited purchasing power and access to food which, in turn, intensifies food-security problems.

North Africa is the only study region with adequate food supplies to meet its nutritional needs. However,

Figure 2

**Nutrition gap as a share of consumption**

*Asia's and LAC's nutrition gaps are projected to remain quite small relative to their consumption throughout the projection period.*



frequent droughts often affect a country's economic growth and welfare. The region's current level of food consumption is among the highest in the world, and consumption is projected to increase in Morocco and Tunisia, but decrease marginally in Algeria and Egypt. Political instability would be a major threat to food security in the region. The North African region, like the others, is faced with unequal food distribution. Therefore, while food consumption, on average, exceeds nutritional requirements, food consumption for 20 percent of the population (the lowest income group) in Algeria is projected to be less than the requirement by 2008.

Food consumption in the New Independent States is projected to increase because of economic recovery, improved export performance, and higher food production. Only the war-torn economy of Tajikistan, projected to have a significant food gap on a consistent

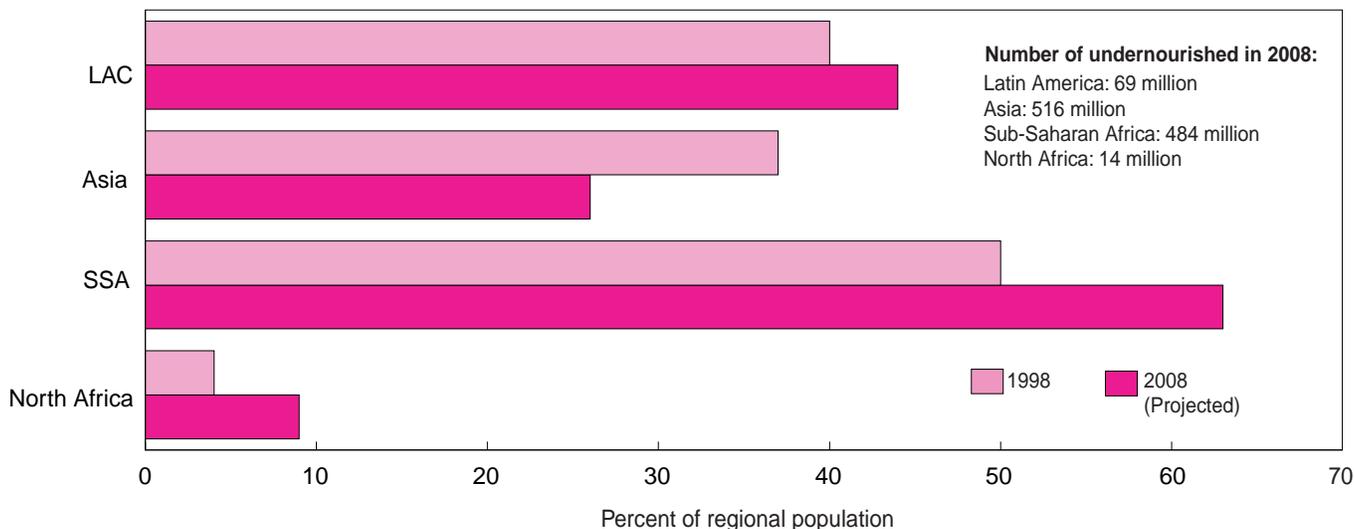
basis, will likely remain vulnerable to food insecurity. It should be noted that data for the NIS are weak, and because their economies are in a transition stage, the projection results should be used with caution.

Based on the projected results, countries covered in this report can be grouped into four different food-security categories: 1) countries that are projected, on the national level, to have adequate food in 2008, but because of inequality in purchasing power, segments of their population will face food insecurity; 2) countries that are moderately food insecure, where projected average food consumption falls in the range of 75 to 99 percent of the nutritional requirement; 3) countries with severe food-insecurity problems, where average food consumption is projected to fall to less than 75 percent of the nutritional requirement; and 4) countries where all income groups are projected to have adequate food (table 3).

Figure 3

**Share of population undernourished**

*The share of population undernourished increases most in Sub-Saharan Africa.*



**Table 3—Food insecurity in 2008**

*In 39 of the 66 countries, consumption is projected to fall short of the nutritional requirement on the national level, and in 12 countries the nutritional problem is due to large disparity in income distribution.*

	Nationally food secure <sup>1</sup>	Moderately food insecure <sup>2</sup>	Highly food insecure <sup>3</sup>
<b>N.Africa:</b>	Algeria		
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa:</b>	Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria	Cameroon, Centr. Afr. Republic, D.R. of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Togo	Burundi, Eritrea, Rwanda, Somalia, Angola, Cape Verde, Chad, Liberia, Sierra Leone
<b>Asia:</b>	India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka	Bangladesh, Nepal	Afghanistan
<b>LAC:</b>	El Salvador, Ecuador, Peru	Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Haiti	
<b>NIS:</b>	Azerbaijan		Tajikistan

In the remaining 26 countries, all income groups are projected to have adequate food.

<sup>1</sup> Adequate food but unequal distribution.

<sup>2</sup> Meet 75 percent or more of requirement.

<sup>3</sup> Meet less than 75 percent of requirement.